



Small Business: Getting Your Use and Building Permit from DCLU

April 2001

Small business is important to Seattle and to the Department of Design, Construction and Land Use (DCLU). If you are moving your business into a new space or expanding in your current location, you are likely to need a use and/or building permit from DCLU. CAM 102 is designed to guide small business owners through DCLU's permit process. The bulletin provides general information on how to prepare your application, apply for your building permit, access DCLU resources and assistance, learn what fees will be charged, estimate how long the process is likely to take, track permit status, and initiate inspections.

We strongly urge you to visit DCLU early in your preparations. If at all possible, discuss your business plans with DCLU *before* you lease or buy new space. Researching your project with DCLU may uncover issues that will require your special attention. Many small business permits can be processed on a 24-hour or field inspection basis. Others, however, may require in-depth construction review or involve a discretionary component, such as environmental review, both of which will add to the review time for your permit. Permits from other departments may also be needed; please be sure to look at our Other Permits sections below.

NOTE: *Underlined text in this CAM indicates online access to related information at DCLU's website at www.cityofseattle.net/dclu.*

RESOURCES

The **Public Resource Center (PRC)** is DCLU's general information center, and provides information documents and codes as well as access to current Master Use Permit files. The PRC is also the home of

the Microfilm Library, where property plan and permit history may be available for your property. Almost all DCLU permits for small businesses will require the use of the microfilm history for your property.

The **Applicant Services Center (ASC)** provides application assistance and intake for all applications to DCLU, including Master Use Permits, Building Permits and associated permits such as electrical, furnace, plumbing, boiler and sign. ASC staff will be advising you on the code and process issues affecting your project and will accept your application when it is complete. For smaller, less complex projects the ASC staff will also review and approve your permit.

The PRC and ASC are located on the 20th floor of Key Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000.

- ASC main phone number: (206) 684-8850
- PRC main phone number: (206) 684-8467
- DCLU Online: www.cityofseattle.net/dclu

RESEARCH

Microfilm Library

For most small businesses, research about your permit will begin at DCLU's Microfilm Library, which is in the PRC. Microfilm hours are 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily except Tuesday, when the library opens at 10 a.m. You will want to obtain copies of the permit history for the building, the last approved site plan with associated parking, any parking calculations available, and the floor plan for your floor and tenant space. ASC staff will need this information to determine the legally established use, occupancy and related requirements for your building and tenant space.

Applicant Service Center

Next stop will be the DCLU Applicant Services Center (ASC) Information Counter. At the ASC, staff will provide zoning, building and application process information. Application process information is also available by phone at (206) 684-8850. In addition to the information from the Microfilm library you will need

to provide the legal description and King County Assessor's parcel number.

Technical Code Assistance

Detailed research concerning potential code issues may require the use of the technical back-up service provided in the ASC. Land Use, Building and Energy/Mechanical Code technical service is available on a walk-in basis. Building and Energy/Mechanical Code service is also available by phone: Building - (206) 684-4630; Energy/Mechanical - (206) 684-7846. It is very helpful to have a plot plan and detailed sketch of your space when speaking with staff.

USING PROFESSIONAL DESIGNERS AND LICENSED BUILDERS

Small business owners are welcome to obtain their own permits, and if you choose to prepare your own application materials, DCLU staff will assist you as much as possible. However, we strongly recommend using a professional designer or licensed builder. Well-prepared, fully researched applications normally experience fewer correction requests and have a higher chance of being expedited. For complex structural projects your plans must be stamped by a licensed architect or engineer. DCLU staff cannot recommend designers and builders and suggest that for information about their services you consult the Yellow Pages and design and construction associations.

USE

In preparing your application you will need to address the matter of "use." Your business activity is classified by use under the Seattle Land Use Code. Typical land use issues for you to discuss with DCLU staff will include:

- What use category is assigned to my business under the Seattle Land Use Code?
- Is my business a change of use from what is already established for my space? (e.g., a retail use changing to a restaurant)
- Is my use allowed outright in my zone? Is it allowed conditionally?
- Is more on-site parking required?
- Is Landmark or Special District approval required?
- Is environmental review (SEPA) required?

OCCUPANCY

"Occupancy" classifies your business activities under the Building Code. Changes in occupancy may require fire safety or structural changes to your space, which can increase the cost of your project. Typical occupancy issues to discuss with DCLU staff include:

- What is the occupancy classification for my business under the Seattle Building Code?
- Is it a change in occupancy from what is already legally established for my space? (e.g., a retail or small restaurant occupancy changing to a public assembly occupancy for a medium or large size restaurant)
- Will a change in occupancy require an additional exit? fire-rated doors? fire-rated walls? upgraded exit corridors? uprinks? (Restaurants and workshops with spray-booths or combustible materials, such as a wood-working shop, are most likely to be affected.)
- What are the ventilation requirements for my commercial kitchen or bakery?
- Is my occupancy allowed above the ground floor?
- Will I need to strengthen my floors?

ACCESSIBILITY

Washington State's accessibility code requires that alterations to commercial space include incremental upgrades in accessibility for buildings not already meeting standards. For smaller projects, 20% of your alteration expenses must be committed to improving accessibility. Compliance with this requirement is most often achieved by upgrading bathrooms or improving direct access to your business, such as ramps. If you propose a substantial renovation (more than 60% of the building's value), you will need to meet all accessibility barrier free requirements.

TYPICAL APPLICATION ISSUES TO ANTICIPATE

Poor quality plans

Be sure your plans meet the plan standards in CAM 106. Plans need to be of sufficient quality and scale to microfilm clearly. For example, photocopies of copies

rarely meet this standard. When in doubt about what to include, contact the ASC staff for clarification.

Illegal uses and construction

In some cases, existing uses and construction for your space have not been approved by DCLU. In the worst cases, it is not possible to approve those uses or construction. Please be sure to research DCLU's permit history early in your preparations to confirm what is the legally established record for your building and tenant space.

Required parking

If you are changing from one retail use to another in the same space, you will likely have no increased parking requirements, but if, for instance, you are changing use from retail to a restaurant or are expanding your floor area, an increased parking requirement may apply. It is important to research this issue very early in the process to determine what is required for your project and what is available on the site to meet that requirements. There are waivers, exceptions and off-site parking solutions that may apply. If you are one tenant in a building with other tenants, you may need to provide some information on the other uses (often available in the microfilm library). This will allow us to calculate parking requirements.

Reconfiguring your space

If you want to divide up floor space differently, you may need to relocate one of your exits or need a fire-rated corridor.

Discretionary Land Use approvals

If your project involves environmental review (SEPA), a variance, conditional use, or shoreline permit, you need to plan for additional weeks of processing time for public comment and appeal periods. ASC staff can help you determine if these elements apply to your project. For environmental review thresholds for requirements, see [DR 23-2000](#).

PLANS/DRAWINGS INFORMATION

For most small business projects you will need to provide a floor plan, a key plan (if there is more than one tenant in the building), and a site plan with parking details. Structural plans are required if significant construction is proposed. At the back of this CAM you will find sample drawings of retail and restaurant tenant spaces, a key plan, and a site plan with parking

details. We will need to see how your space and site will look when you are ready to open.

Floor plan needs to show:

- Uses and dimensions of each room.
- Dimensions of aisles, corridors and exits.
- Door swing directions.
- All changes in location of walls, with construction details.
- Ceiling suspension details (if you are installing a ceiling).
- Accessibility features (if applicable).
- Kitchen equipment layout.
- Restroom locations.
- Restroom accessibility dimensions (if restrooms are new or being remodeled).
- Seating areas.

Key plan needs to show:

- All tenant spaces, including yours.

Site plan need to shows:

- Property dimensions.
- Building location.
- All tenant spaces with dimensions.
- Parking stalls with their dimensions.
- Parking lot access and aisles, with dimensions.

Quite often applicants bring preliminary drawings to the ASC to see if things are headed in the right direction. Letting us review your drawings with you before your application appointment can be very helpful.

For projects that include major additions or new structures also consult the following CAMs:

- [CAM 103 Plot Plan Requirements](#)
- [CAM 103A Plot Plan Guidelines](#)
- [CAM 106 Drawing Standards](#)

TYPES OF PERMITS

There are several DCLU permit processes available for small business projects. They differ in review time, amount of drawing details and documentation needed, and whether plans can be dropped off or need to be submitted by appointment.

Subject To Field Inspection (STFI)

This process is for the simplest projects. STFI permits are available for commercial spaces of 4500 square feet or less, with only non-structural work and no proposed change in use, occupancy or exiting. Code requirements are verified in the field by the building inspector. Fees for STFI permits are lower. No appointments are needed to apply and STFI permits are normally issued within 24 hours.

24 Hour Review

These projects require plan review but are relatively simple. They can include change of use and occupancy, but cannot include discretionary components such as environmental review. These projects have a 24 hour initial review time.

Full Plan Review

These projects are more complex, such as a major addition or a new structure, require full plans routing, and can take approximately 8 weeks. If the project includes a discretionary component such as environmental review (SEPA), initial review could take 12 weeks and will include public comment and appeal time periods.

SUBJECT TO FIELD INSPECTION (STFI) PERMITS

Plans Needed for STFI application

For commercial STFI, in most cases only a floor plan is required. A key plan is required, if you share your building with other tenants. See the examples at the back of this CAM.

Application forms for STFI projects

Forms can be picked up at the [Applicant Service Center \(ASC\)](#), by mail and in some cases are available online.

- **Subject to Field Inspection Application** - requires the property's legal description, Assessor's Parcel Number, project description, contact person, and other basic information.

- **Building/Energy Code Checklist for STFIs** - serves as a convenient checklist to determine if your project qualifies for STFI.
- **Building or Mechanical Permit Contact Disclosure Form** - is required for all construction projects with a value of more than \$5,000, and requires information under Washington State law that must be posted at the job site (e.g., owner, prime contractor, lending institution, etc.).

Applying for an STFI permit

1. Prepare your application

Read the pertinent CAMs and other information materials, prepare your drawings, and fill out the forms noted above

2. Coaching - strongly recommended

At any stage of the process, you are welcome to come to DCLU for coaching. The submittal of the correct and full information is essential for a successful application. No appointment is necessary, and there is no charge for coaching.

3. Application

Apply at the ASC with your prepared materials - no appointment is necessary. Full fees are required at intake for STFIs. (See Fees section below)

4. Corrections

For STFI permits, most corrections are handled at the time of intake or in the field by the building inspector.

5. Issuance

Typical processing time for STFI permits is one working day from the date of filing. The permit will be mailed to you.

PLAN REVIEW PERMITS (INCLUDES 24 HOUR REVIEW PERMITS)

Forms

The following forms can be picked up at the [Applicant Service Center \(ASC\)](#), and are available on DCLU's website. Check below to see which forms apply to your project.

- **Address Records Worksheet and Instructions** - required for all non-STFI applications. Requires King County Assessor's Parcel Number (APN),

legal description, site plan with property dimensions.

- **Building or Mechanical Permit Contact Disclosure Form** - required for all construction projects with a value of more than \$5,000, and requires information under Washington State law that must be posted at the job site (e.g., owner, prime contractor, lending institution, etc.).
- **The Financial Responsibility Statement** - is required for projects over \$50,000 valuation.
- The **DCLU cover sheet for multifamily/commercial projects** - is required for all plan review permits; provides a convenient summary of all major project issues. (Available online only in CAD format)
- **Construction Stormwater Control Checklist** - is required when any site disturbance is involved in projects of less than 5000 feet of new or replaced impervious surface. The checklist information addresses soil stabilization over winter months, sediment retention on-site, prevention of pollution, and construction vehicle access.
- **Pre-Application Site Visit Request Form** - is required for any site disturbance. The owner's signature on this form authorizes a site visit by the inspector. The form also notes whether grading, drainage, and/or erosion control review is required and whether the site is in an Environmentally Critical Area, with the fee dependent upon which of these are applicable.
- **Lighting Summary** - is required if any changes to lighting are proposed. The form helps you calculate your maximum allowed lighting wattage.
- **Envelope UA Calculations (WA State Nonresidential Energy Compliance)** - is required when you are proposing changes to the exterior envelope of your space, including windows and doors.

Type of Plans Required

For projects with no additions or new structures you will need:

- floor plan
- key plan
- site plan

For projects with additions or a new building you will need:

- floor plan
- elevation drawings
- structural drawings
- key plan
- site plan

Number of Plans Required

- 4 sets of plans + 1 additional set if food service is proposed (each with a cover sheet stapled on the top)
- 2 extra plot plans, showing parking
- You may also need to provide grading plans or drainage plans, depending on the specifics of your project.

Applying for a Plan Review Permit (including 24 Hour Review Permits)

There are five steps for a submitting your application for plan review. At the appointment we will determine if we can expedite your application. We will be looking for enough information in the right form to allow complete review in a couple of hours. It's important to send someone to the appointment who knows your business operation and how the construction will be accomplished.

1. Address Records Worksheet and Instructions

This form is used to confirm property details and to create a project number for your project. The project number is used to track the progress of your application from pre-application stage through project review and permit issuance. You will need to submit a plot plan with the worksheet. The documents can be submitted by fax to (206) 233-7866; dropped off at the ASC counter; or, mailed to the ASC. You can also sign in at the ASC counter before 11:30 am and get the worksheet processed while you wait (no appointment necessary unless your legal description is complex). This is on a first-come, first-served basis. Faxed, mailed-in submittals and drop-offs will normally be processed within 48 hours.

2. Pre-Application Site Visit Application (only if ground disturbance is proposed)

This form is required for projects involving any site disturbance. The owner's signature on this form authorizes a site visit by the inspector. The form notes whether grading, drainage, and/or erosion control review is required and whether the site is in an Environmentally Critical Area, with the fee dependent upon which of these are applicable (fees range from \$63 to \$500). If this form is required, it may be submitted at the same time as the Address Records Worksheet described above.

3. Coaching - strongly recommended

No appointment or fee is necessary for this session with a Permit Specialist. Coaching is available at any time during the preparation of your application. The purpose is to provide specific information on the project and submittal requirements, including fee estimates.

4. Screening- required

No appointment or fee is required for this review with a Permit Leader. This review is to verify completeness of the plans, forms and other documents prior to submittal. Steps 1 and 2 above must be completed prior to screening.

5. Intake

This is done by appointment (or on a walk-in basis, but there is no guarantee that intake will occur on a walk-in basis). A portion of the fees will need to be paid at this time (see the discussion on fees, below). To make an appointment call the ASC, 206-684-8850 or make the appointment while visiting the ASC.

Permit Tracking

You can get information about your permit as it is being reviewed by visiting our web site at **www.cityofseattle.net/dclu**. You will need either the site address or the project/permit number to track the project review. Click on the Applicant Services Center icon in the left column; on the next screen click "Permit Desk." You may also call plans routing, at (206) 684-8169.

Permit Issuance

For Plan Review Permits, you will be notified by telephone when your plans have been approved by DCLU and other relevant city agencies. When you have been notified, go to Plans Routing in the Applicant Services Center to pick up your permit and

approved plans, and to pay any outstanding fees. Occupancy is not allowed until permitted work has been completed, all inspections have been made and, if needed, a certificate of occupancy has been issued by DCLU.

FEES

Permits fees are established by the Seattle Permit Fee Subtitle and can be estimated at the Applicant Services Center. With an interior alteration project, you are required to give us a "fair market value" for work to be done, meaning labor and materials at current market rates. For field inspection permits, all of the fees are paid at the time of application. For others, approximately 80% of the estimated fees are paid at the appointment. Fees paid when submitting the address records research worksheet are credited toward that amount. Payment by check or credit card can be processed in person, or checks can be mailed to DCLU.

Example (for 2001): \$10,000 non-structural tenant improvement - STFI

\$189.50

Example (2001): \$20,000 non-structural tenant improvement with change of use and occupancy - Plan Review

\$574.50

Other departments will charge separately for permits issued by those departments, and, in some cases, they will charge separately for reviewing a DCLU permit. You need to discuss those fees with the departments doing review.

INSPECTIONS

To request a building inspection for STFI or Plan Review permits, call the 24-hour inspections line at (206) 684-8900. Same day inspections are provided for requests made by 7 a.m. If you have questions for your inspector, contact them at (206) 684-8950.

OTHER PERMITS AND DEPARTMENTS

Mechanical permits - including permits for rangehoods, are approved by DCLU and are accepted at the ASC without appointment unless submitted as part of the use/construction application.

Electrical permits - are required for wiring and service upgrading and are obtained from DCLU's Electrical Counter in the ASC.

Health Dept. permits - for food preparation or handling; the Health Department is located at 999 3rd Ave, Suite 700, (206) 296-4727. The Health Department will review any application that involves food handling or preparation, as well as changes to bathrooms (DCLU can route your plans for you).

Plumbing and gas piping permits - are issued by the Health Department at DCLU's ASC

Fire Dept. permits - some businesses will need separate permits from the Fire Department (301-2nd Avenue South, (206) 386-1331 - DCLU must route your plans for you.) Installing a paint spraybooth, storing flammable liquids, welding and cutting, operating a restaurant with 100 or more occupants or a self-service gas station are some of the activities which require annual fire permits. Fire Department staff are now located at the ASC to assist with plan review and provide technical assistance.

Urban Conservation certificates - review boards staffed by the Urban Conservation Division of the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) must approve exterior alterations in all Special Review and Historic Districts and for Landmark structures. In some cases interior alterations and changes of use are also reviewed. There are special restrictions for these structures, and it is important to discuss anticipated changes with DON early in the process. To reach the Urban Conservation Division, call (206) 684-0228.

PHONE NUMBERS

Public Resource Center (PRC): (206) 684-8467

Applicant Services Center (ASC): (206) 684-8850

Building Code Technical Back-Up: (206) 684-4630

Energy/Mechanical Code Technical Back-Up:
(206) 684-7846

Building inspections: (206) 684-8900

Electrical permits: (206) 684-8464

Seattle Fire Department: (206) 386-1331

Seattle/King County Health Department:
(206) 296-4727

Seattle/King County Health, Plumbing & Gas Piping:
(206) 684-5198

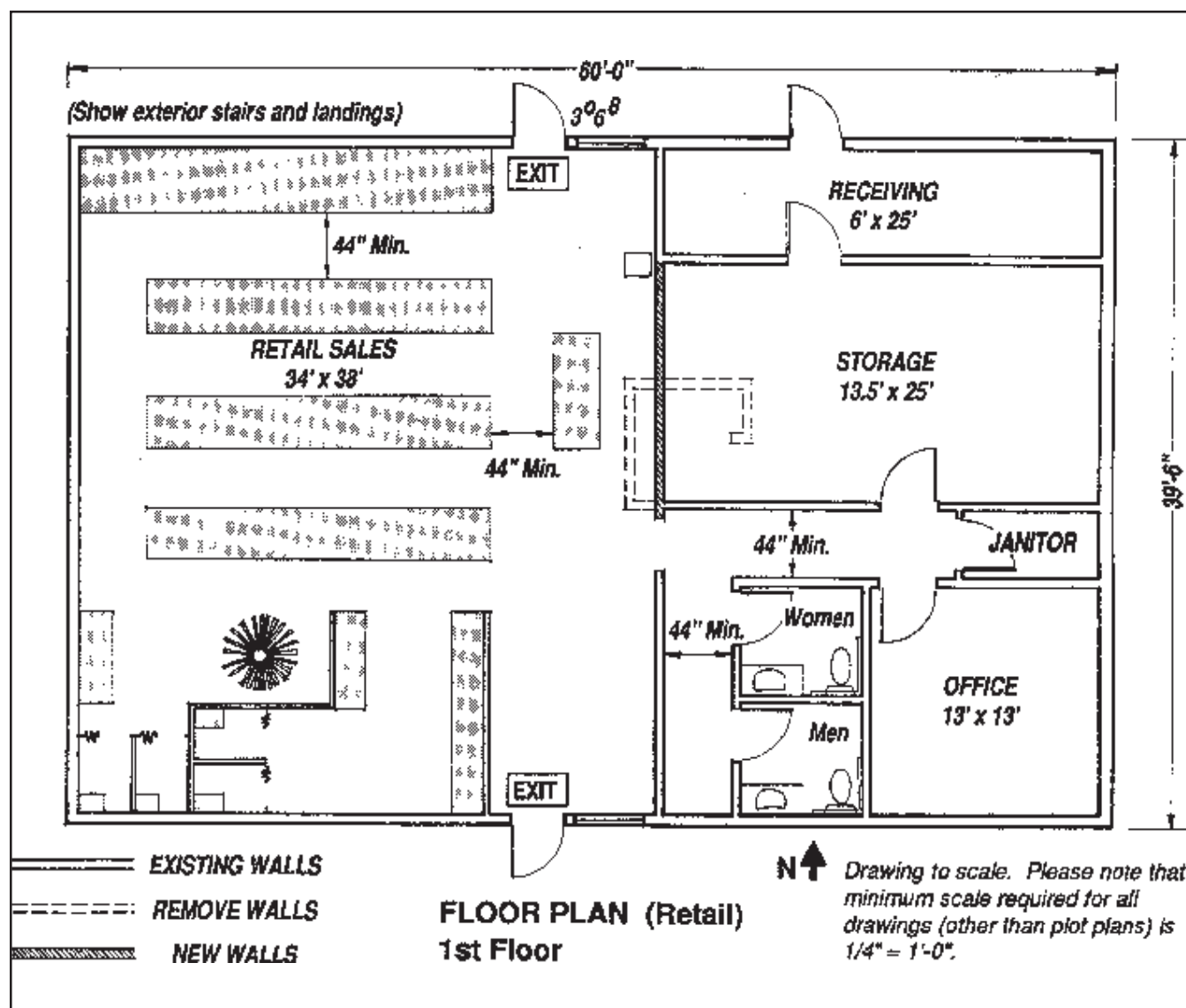
Department of Neighborhoods, Urban Conservation
Division: (206) 684-0228

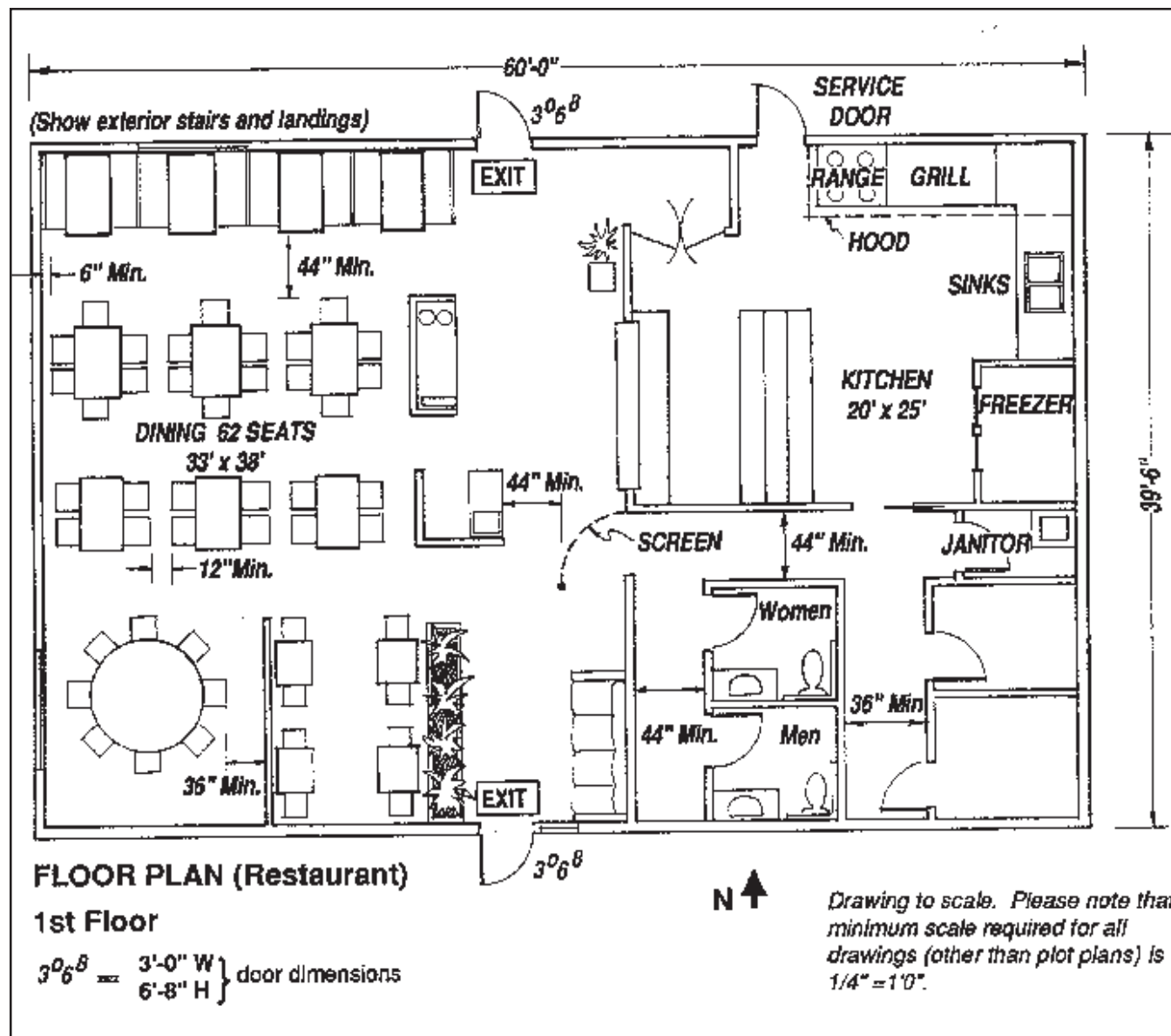
Seattle Public Utilities, Water Services: (206) 684-5800

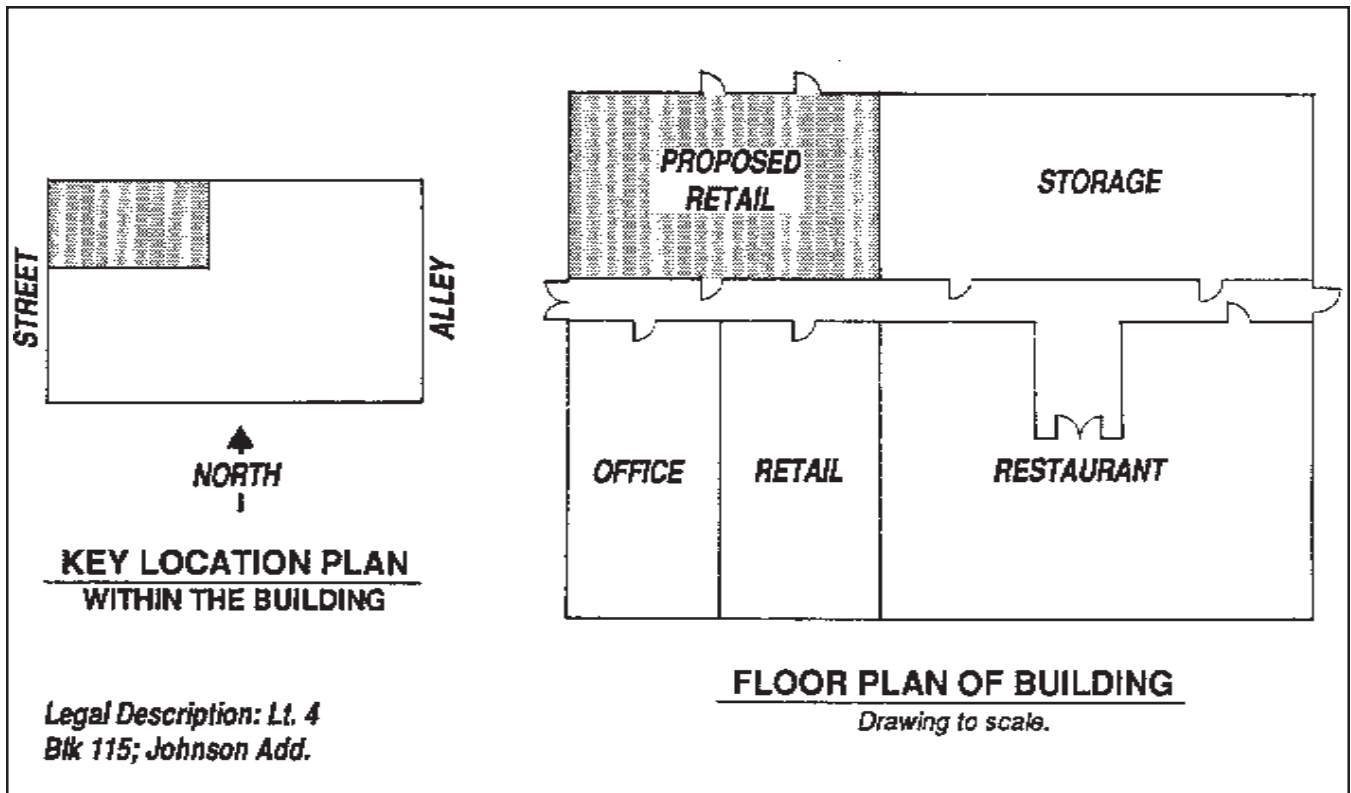
Access to Information

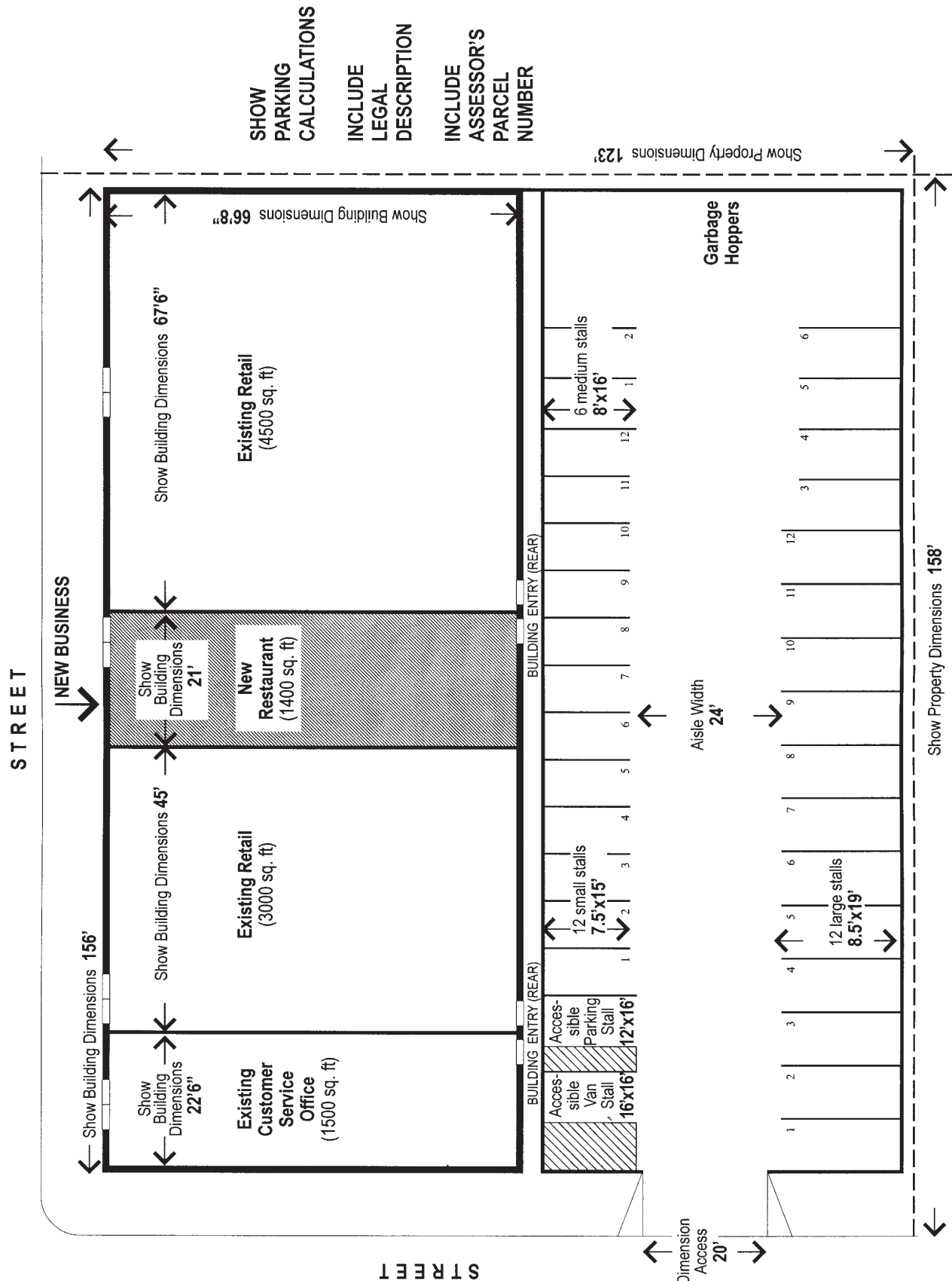
Links to electronic versions of DCLU **Client Assistance Memos (CAMs)**, **Director's Rules**, and the **Seattle Municipal Code** are available on the "Publications" and "Codes" pages of our website at **www.cityofseattle.net/dclu**. Paper copies of these documents are available from our Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Key Tower at 700 Fifth Avenue in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8467.

PLEASE NOTE: DCLU public information documents should not be used as substitutes for codes and regulations. Details of your project should be reviewed for specific compliance by DCLU staff.









SHOW
PARKING
CALCULATIONS

INCLUDE
LEGAL
DESCRIPTION

INCLUDE
ASSESSOR'S
PARCEL
NUMBER